Bang Chan Canal bissected the community and joined, about one mile south, Sāensaēb Canal, a broad old waterway connecting Bangkok and Mīnburī with the canal network of the central plains. A well-raised, year-round road which ran between Bangkok, 20 miles to the southwest, and Mīnburī, two miles east, cut through one side of the area. On it lay Bang Khūat, another community, about eight kilometers from Bang Chan (cf. Kaufman:1960), and a cluster of houses called "Kilō pāet," (Kilō 8) both west of Bang Chan and nearer to Bangkok. A shallow canal flanked this road most of the way.

The town of Mīnburī with district offices, shops, and pharmacists, and a good-sized Muslim population was well-known to most of the residents of Bang Chan. Its middle school drew from the surrounding farming countryside, including Bang Chan, those few pupils whose educational aspirations led them beyond the local elementary school. Mīnburī had electricity, but no telephone or telegraph facilities.

For nine months of the year, while Bang Chan lay under water, most of the marketing was done through boat-vendors who plied the canals. During the dry months, or for large festivities, people marketed at Mīnburī, Kilō pāet, or in Bangkok.

The Thai government administered Bang Chan through two district offices (amphoē), one located in Mīnburī, the other in Bangkapi, close to Bangkok. The common boundary of their respective districts happened to run through the middle of the community. Seven local head men, each in charge of one of the seven hamlets (mūban) into which the entire community was divided reported to one or the other district office. They transmitted instructions from their superiors to the farmers, maintained order mostly by their personal prestige, and kept the village census more or less up to date by recording and reporting marriages, births, and deaths.

At the center of the community was the cherished Buddhist temple with its abbot, monks, and novices, numbering 15 to 50 depending on the season. The elementary public school, occupying one of its buildings,[1] was attended by 300 children aged eight to fifteen, both Buddhist and Muslim. The temple compound was surrounded by a number of houses, including a cafe and stalls for small vendors. A small country mosque (surao) in another hamlet was the religious center for the Muslim minority, some of whose children attended another school just outside the Bang Chan community. The abbot and the imam, the respective local heads of the two religious faiths, were of importance in the community as leaders.

1. A new large school has since been built away from the temple compound.

arbitrary, were it not for the Buddhist temples, a neighboring government-operated primary school, and a few small stores, all of which provide a center for the community. There the inhabitants paddle their boats for religious observances, their children attend school, and anyone with a few minutes gossips over a cup of coffee. These people, furthermore, speak of themselves when outside the community as coming from Bang Chan, and the temple familiarly called "Wat Bang Chan" helps outsiders to identify the particular area. 361 621

The community's 1600 inhabitants live in one of seven hamlets, each with an officiating headman who may offer some leadership to the neighborhood. Bang Chan has no political unity beyond the informal influence of the head priest at the temple, for administrative units of local government disregard its social and psychological coherence. On one side of the main canal headmen go a rough two miles to attend meetings with the District Officer, while their neighbors across the canal must spend half a day on the canal to reach the district offices which govern them. 161 621 634 624

As the survey results indicate, about 88 per cent of the households receive the major portion of their income from cultivating rice, though many of these men and women turn briefly to other occupations during the slack season. The remaining fraction is divided between persons engaged in trade as storekeepers or vendors and those in such service occupations as highway labor or school janitor. 621 243 434 443 464

A little less than half of the population owns the land or a portion of the land it works, the remainder renting from neighbors and landholders living away from Bang Chan. Though land becomes scarcer every year and its subdivision into small plots finer, land problems and landlord problems are not important concerns of the area farmers. Economic factors also grant higher status within the community to land holders than to renters and the landless. So also age and religious piety bring respect. Yet social structure articulates flexibly enough to afford a young renter of good reputation and energy a decent hearing at a meeting, and indeed, he might carry his point in a group of wealthy landholders. Two or three times in past generations young men have moved from thatched houses in Bang Chan to high government positions in Bangkok through fortunate connections that enabled them to attend leading schools, as well as through their own industry. People merely invoke the Buddhist concept of accumulating merit in present and past lives through good deeds when they comment on the rise of such persons, for with sufficient merit all is possible. Thus regularity in the socio-economic order becomes a moderate level of probability admitting many exceptions. 423 427 554 621 [555] [771]

T 63 Place of Bangchan in the Administrative Area

In the highly centralized system of Thai administration, the whole country is divided into 9 circles (pharg), 71 provinces (changwad), 414 districts (amphur) and 77 sub-districts (king-amphur), 3,650 communes (tambol), and some 50,000 hamlets (muban).

CT 621 • 634 121 In the section on reasons for the choice of the field site (page 32) mention was made of an artificial division of Bangchan between two administrative units. By that we mean one part of our "natural" or "functional" Bangchan village administratively belongs to one amphur and the other part belongs to another amphur. The situation will become more vivid when we discuss our "natural" Bangchan village.

CT Our "Natural" Bangchan Village

621 121 In this study we are not interested in an administrative unit which is often an artificial division, but rather in a "natural" or "functional" village which may be operationally defined as a geographical area inhabited by a conglomeration of people having one or more common social centers.

CT 621 794 872 Bangchan people patronize an active Buddhist religious institution popularly known as Wat Bangchan, and an adjacent government primary school, both centrally located in the community.

CT 621 *128 For practical reasons for ease in statistical manipulation, we assume that the smallest administrative unit --

[Erretum: this should read "page 36"---Analyst]

361 direction dividing it into two halves, the Bangchan half
312 consisting of BC4, BC5, BC6, and the Kannayao half consistingcof KY5, KY6, KY7 and KY8.

621 As mentioned earlier, our functional Bangchan village
• 634 is under two different administrative authorities, the Bangchan half consisting of part of Tambol Bangchan which is in turn part of Amphur Minburi in Changwad Phra-nakorn (Bangkok) and the Kannayao half consisting of part of Tambol Kannayao which is part of Amphur Bangkapi in the same Changwad Phranakorn.

History of Settlement

174 No official records on the history of the settlement
361 of Bangchan could be discovered, but evidence from genealo-
[503] gies provides a few clues on the subject. Following the digging of Saensaeb Canal some one hundred and twenty years ago, settlement was made along the banks of this important canal which provides one of the few connections between the
175 Menam and Bangprakong rivers. It was not, however, until
621 the 1870's, apparently, that people found it necessary to
361 move onto the land away from the canal. At that time, according to one of our older informants, her father was born in what is now Bangchan, his father and mother having come out from Bangkok as a young married couple to take up farm-
175 ing where plenty of land was available from the Crown. These
621 people and their followers, usually kinfolk or friends, cleared off scrub jungle areas in which, it is claimed, tigers and

7: Janlekha X-4,5 (1948-1953)p956 AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bangchan

MAP I

131
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• 634
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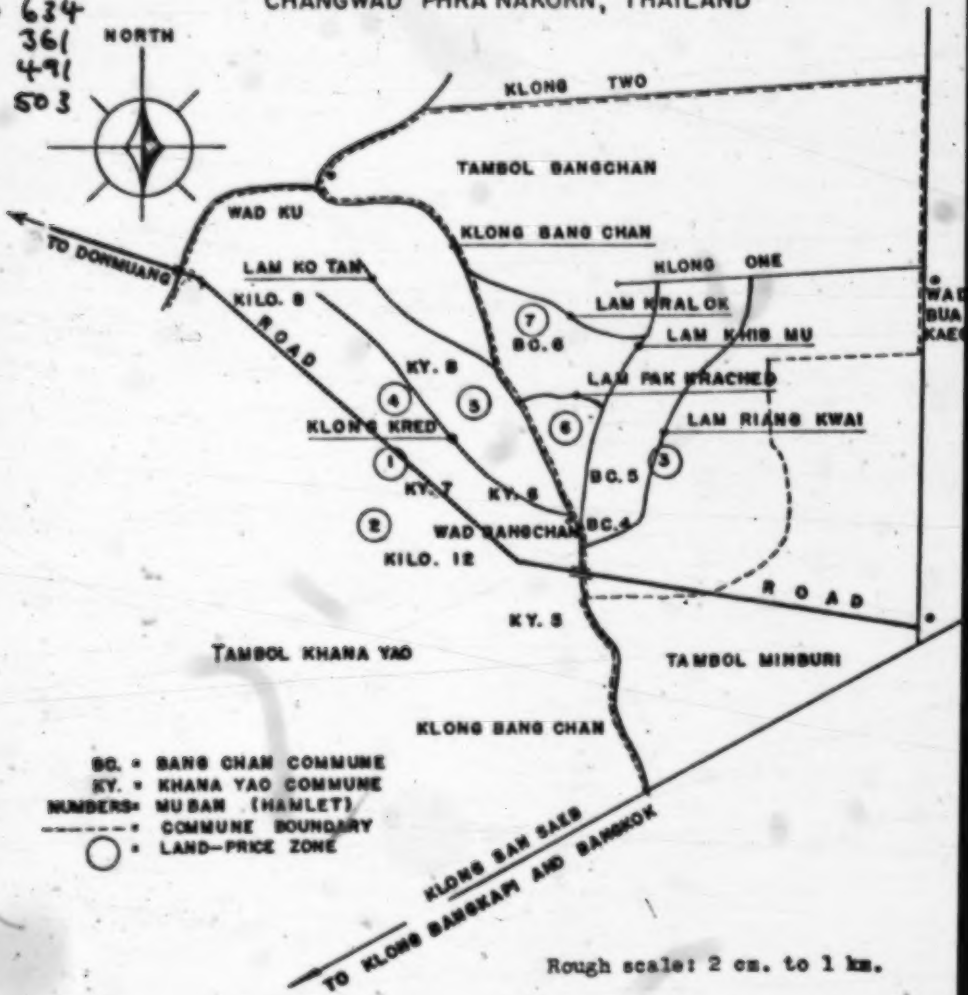
SKETCH MAP OF TAMBOL KHANA YAO, AMPHOE BANGKAPI AND TAMBOL BANGCHAN, AMPHOE MINBURI CHANGWAD PHRA NAKORN, THAILAND



Rough scale: 2 cm. to 1 km.